

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

Executive Office,
State of Texas.

Austin, Texas, March 10, 1911.

To the Senate:

Senate bill No. 23 provides for the location and establishment at the penitentiary at Rusk, by the Board of Prison Commissioners, of a cotton factory for the manufacture of certain articles from cotton. I am returning the bill to you herewith without approval for the reasons assigned in the following statement:

The new prison law, creating a Prison Commission, vests in the Commissioners power to establish such industries whenever in their judgment it is advisable to do so. The bill herewith returned to you carries an appropriation of \$150,000 to build and equip the cotton factory provided for. Already you have been advised that the new prison laws of the State call for large expenditures of money in excess of what it has heretofore cost to maintain the penitentiary system. When the present Prison Commissioners took charge of the system they found it practically stripped of supplies and the treasury scantily supplied with money, and they estimate that it will require more than a quarter of a million dollars more money than the receipts to meet the expense of its management during the next six months. A concurrent resolution now in the Governor's office advises that the Legislature will adjourn on March the eleventh, at noon; but as yet no bill has been passed, so far as the Governor has been advised, to supply the means to meet the appropriation provided for by Senate bill No. 23. The Constitution provides for "casual deficiencies," but I know of no provision in our organic law which would justify the Prison Commission in creating a deficiency for the purpose of carrying into effect the bill which I am returning to you. There is nothing in the bill itself providing for it. The Legislature is about to adjourn without even levying a tax to meet the absolutely necessary expenses of the State government. Ordinary prudence in the management of the public's affairs would dictate that no expense not absolutely necessary should be incurred without provision previously being made to meet it. By the passage of the bill the Legislature creates an obligation without making any provision whatever to meet it. This is a valid

objection to the measure, and is in itself sufficient grounds for disapproving the bill.

Further than this, it is not good policy to make further experiments of this kind with the public funds. A railroad has been built connecting the Rusk prison with Palestine, and the experiment has been, up to this time, a great failure, and is now costing the State several hundred dollars per month above the income from its operation. I do not want to see other experiments connected with the Rusk prison which might cause others to advocate the abandonment of this prison, as some even in the recent past have suggested. The Democratic party for years has demanded that the convicts be worked within the prison walls and taken out of competition with honest free labor, as far as it is practical to do so. This I most earnestly favor now. To establish a cotton factory at Rusk in accordance with the terms of the bill would bring convict labor, in the manufacture of certain cotton goods, into competition with the same articles now being manufactured in many places in Texas with free labor. Besides, a still further objection to this course is in the fact that experience has taught that such manufacturing is not profitable from the labor of convicts of mature years. If such an experiment was to have been engaged in by the State it should have been located at Gatesville, where the juvenile criminals could have been used and trained in the manufacture of such goods. Perhaps a laudable purpose inspired this bill, but I am of the opinion that it will be an experiment of doubtful wisdom, even if there was money in the treasury with which to meet the expense of establishing and operating it.

Certain small manufactures could be established in connection with the Rusk prison, in my opinion, which would be less expensive and more profitable, but these can be built by the Prison Commission as fast as the revenues at their disposal will justify. The manufacture of binder twine, for instance, could be successfully engaged in without bringing the product of the convicts' labor into serious competition with free labor in this State.

Under all the circumstances, I can not give approval to this experimental expenditure of public money, more especially at this time, when the Legislature has made no provision whatever to meet the expense.

Respectfully submitted,
O. B. COLQUITT,
Governor of Texas.